

LIAISON

BBC

9 April 1955

[Redacted]
London Bureau, FBIS
c/o American Embassy
41 Grosvenor Square
London W. 1, England

Subj: RFB Requirements

Dear Alan:

Phil recently requested that I forward the attached comments to John Campbell, along with an expression of thanks for the RFB opportunity to orient him during his recent visit here. I hesitate to mail the comments directly to Campbell, partly because his private remarks to me after his afternoon with RFB indicated that he came away somewhat unconvinced and the comments might therefore not produce the desired result.

I believe that it would be more effective if they were given to Campbell in person, as examples of the points on which we are asking our London staff to consult more frequently with the RFB.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Attachments:
Comments

RGS:eat

STAT

STAT

9 April 1955

CHRONIC PROBLEMS OF MONITORING FOR ANALYSIS PURPOSES

1. A major FBIS effort frequently utilized by the American intelligence community centers on quantitative measurement of Soviet propaganda themes and description of propaganda techniques. Toward this end a stable and accurate sample of Soviet broadcasts is essential, and to a large extent this is now obtained through the daily lists of commentary-type material broadcast by Soviet transmitters supplied by FBIS bureaus and the BBC. In maintaining a high level of accuracy, FBIS currently wires about one query daily to London regarding these lists. These queries are confined to items on which information from other sources casts doubt; to avoid imposing an excessive checking burden, the several items weekly on which experience alone casts suspicion are rarely queried. BBC's contribution to these lists has in the past been largely commendable, but could be improved along three lines:

- a. Reporting from Soviet newscasts. Only a few distinct and easily identifiable news items ever need be reported for listing purposes--i.e., Soviet notes, official decrees and two or three other stipulated categories. The degree of accuracy and completeness in present reporting is such as to seriously reduce the value of this information; when generalizations or arguments utilizing the bearing of these news items are now formulated, inevitably further time-consuming checking in the field is required. About half of all queries to London pertain to the reporting of news items.
- b. Listing of repeats. Whenever Moscow rebroadcasts a commentary, a notation to that effect is needed. About one-third of all queries are necessitated simply because of failure to report rebroadcasts.
- c. Describing comment. A brief description of each commentary to reveal subject matter, aspects discussed and the area concerned is needed. Lack of this information inevitably results in FBIS compilers in London requesting amplifications, and currently it is necessary to make three or four such requests daily.

2. For propaganda analysis accurate translations are vital; while some BBC Russian monitors have set standards worthy of FBIS emulation, others apparently have not exhibited the same capability. In spite of unusual precautions taken when an especially complex analysis turns on a single word or phrase, seemingly innocuous translation lapses sometimes

become painfully evident. To illustrate: In Molotov's 8 February Supreme Soviet speech a reference to shortcomings in Satellite construction was mistranslated shortcomings in government; the mistranslation was utilized as evidence in an interpretation of the Nagy-Rakosi dispute, causing subsequent embarrassment to FMIS. In December 1954 a reference in the Khrushchev-Bernal interview to newly born was translated new agricultural program instead of the politically significant (and correct) term new course. In June 1954 a reference in the Soviet agricultural decision to grain crops was reported in connection with the link system of labor organization, a procedure specifically condemned by the Communist Party earlier and the key issue in the fall of A.A. Andreev and the rise of Khrushchev to control over agriculture before Stalin's death. Actually the reference was to row crops, and FMIS was required to print a retraction.

Perhaps the present methods of rechecking important pronouncements could be further refined.

3. Frequently it is necessary to check one broadcast version of a commentary or important statement against another version in order to determine special emphasis or "tailoring" for an audience. Since current reporting is one primary FMIS function, the rather consistent three to four day lag in obtaining these checks detracts from their value. Possibly some explanation is offered by the rather widespread misconception that such variations are not meaningful. At any rate all such requests are screened with exceptional care before being forwarded and prompt fulfillment is essential.